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Did Germany Murder Its Bible?



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Did Germany Murder Its Bible?

Amos 8:12, They shall run to and fro
to seek the word of the Lord, and shall
not find it.

The Bible in the days of Amos was only a little Bible, but it was all the Bible they had. In the midst of great national prosperity the people forgot God; they forgot prayer; they forgot the House of God; they went their own way in the pursuit of pleasure.

And then this prophet stood up and tried to arouse them and to bring them back to God. He said to them, in our lesson:

"The days are coming, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water; but of hearing the words of the Lord.

"And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it."

People who have the Bible sometimes disregard it. They stop reading it. They put it out of their lives. They murder their own faith in it. And then there comes a terrible day when they want it back; they cry for it; they grope for it; they yearn for their old faith; but it is gone.

A speaker at one of our Pan-Presbyterian Councils a number of years ago related a "Persian Fable" which I remember too obscurely to reproduce it in its full beauty; but it told of a young prince who brought to his royal father a nutshell, which, opening on a hinge, contained a magical tent.

This little tent was of such miraculous construction that, when spread in the nursery, the babes could play beneath its folds.

When it was set up in the throne-room the King and his regal company could converse under its shelter.

When opened in the courtyard, the family and all the servants could come together beneath its shadow.

When spread wide open in the camp where the soldiers were training, it became a vast pavilion in which the whole army could assemble.

Surely this little tent may be called a symbol of God's word. Everything is contained within the nutshell of the Bible. Open it in the nursery and the parents and children will gather with rapture beneath its folds.

Spread it in the courtyard, and the entire household may assemble for morning and evening devotions under its shelter.

Set it up in the village, and it becomes a church, and the whole town sings praises to God under its canopy.

Pitch it upon the plain and a great army will gather within it.

Send it to the heathen lands, and it opens out into a great tabernacle that fills and covers the world.

Does our civilization owe anything to the Bible? Our civilization owes everything to the Bible. No Bible, no civilization! Our civilization owes it to the Bible that it is delivered from superstition. The Bible is not a Dream-Book. It is not a puzzle-book. It is not a trick-book. It is not a book to be read in the dark. Its messages are as clear as crystal. It had no underground crypts in it. It

is a book of the Open Door. When you study it, study it in the light. Take it out where the sunshine can smite its fair pages with white light. Show it to the world; let the world study it; examine it; analyze it. It can bear investigation.

The Bible gives us courage; it gives us hope; it floods our souls with its glowing radiance. It enables us to see a light that shines beyond this world and projects its luster over into the world of reality on the other side of the grave.

Dr. Bustard says: "If we do not believe in the authority and inspiration of the Scriptures, we shall be useless in Christian service."

This is the Book which can never be superseded or destroyed. Men have dissected this book. They have burned it and scattered its ashes upon the waters. They have trampled it under the feet of their horses. And yet, every book in this old volume is still crying out to the critics what Paul said to the jailer: "Do thyself no harm; we are all here!"

"This little Book I'd rather own
Than all the gold and gems
That e'er in monarch's coffers shone,
Than all their diadems.

Nay, were the sea a chrysolite,
The earth a golden ball,
And diamonds all the stars of night,—
This Book were worth them all."

Is it possible to murder the Bible? No! Absolutely no! Should this earth endure for a million years, and then for millions more, as I sincerely and devoutly believe it will, the Bible will be the one document that will retain its youth in imperishable splendor, and will

be the guide of the footsteps of mankind through the ages of the ages!

It is not possible to murder the Bible, but it is entirely possible to murder one's faith in the Bible, to murder a whole nation's faith in the Bible.

You, sir,—you,—you,—may murder your own faith in the Bible. You may neglect it. You may scorn it. You may despise it. You may laugh at it. And, by and by, on some lonely day when the burdens begin to break you, and dear friends have gone away into the Great Silence, and the skies around you are growing dark, and you want to get something out of the Old Book to help you and to sustain you in the time of sore testing, you may learn that that something has vanished away. You have murdered your Bible by murdering your own faith in your Bible.

It is written in this Book that there are some things that one can do, the doing of which will destroy his own soul.

We are going to ask and to answer, this hour, the question: "Did Germany Murder its Bible?" Also we are going to ask the question: "Might it be possible for America to murder its Bible?" And another question: "What might happen to those who murder their Bible?" And yet another question: "Will there be found a way back to a forsaken and neglected Bible?"

I believe that I am in agreement with the majority of scholarly men when I say that it was in Germany that the destructive criticism of the Bible had its birth. It was in Tübingen University in Germany that the first fountain of deadly unbelief began to spurt forth its jets of intellectual and moral and spiritual poison. The section of Germany that consid-

ers itself "learned," drank that poison in huge gulps that intoxicated its brain. But that same subtle venom has been tasted by all Germany and has cankered and polluted all Germany, and has spread into every nation and kindred and tongue and people where German literature has penetrated.

Destructive criticism of the Bible may be stamped: "Made in Germany."

I think it was Ferdinand Christian Baur who was the real patentee of the German Poison-Fountain. He was Professor of Church History at the University of Tübingen. As a church historian he is recognized as a man of distinguished ability. He was a follower of Hegel in his philosophy, and a large proportion of the disciples of Hegel become critical and distrustful of nearly everything.

This Professor Baur insisted that the disputation between Paul and Peter as related in the book of Acts was never settled, and that the two men never became reconciled; that the early church was split into two factions,—one faction standing with Paul and the other with Peter. He denied that Paul wrote any of the Epistles that bear his name, except First and Second Corinthians, Galatians, and the major part of Romans.

He practically ignored in his earlier writings the Gospel accounts of the Death and Resurrection of our Lord, though he afterwards,—somewhat reluctantly, it seems to me, and with mental reservations,—assented to the Resurrection. He taught that the advent of Jesus was the advent of Pure Reason; that Pure Reason began with the coming of Christ.

From this noxious thinker, Baur, and from his co-worker in unbelief, David Friederich Strauss, the poison spread like an infection.

Following them came Zeller and Schwegler, Koestlin and Planck, Hilgenfeld and Holsten, Kuenen and Wellhausen, Gunkel and Procksch, Schraeder and Spiegelberg,—men whose names could hardly be mistaken for Irish names,—and by their writings they broke down and destroyed the faith of all Germany in the Inspiration of the Bible and its great messages. Destructive Criticism bled the faith of the German people to death.

Very hurriedly, and without paying much attention to their historical sequence, let me name a few of the deliverances of the school of unbelief:

Abraham and the other patriarchs were only myths; Moses is not to be considered a historical person. Every page of the Old Testament is freckled and spotted with fable. There is no such thing as Sacred History. The Pentateuch is anonymous. The historical books are only a hodge-podge. There never was any Adam. Paradise is a fairy-tale. There never was any Fall of Man. No such monument as the Tower of Babel was ever built. Human speech was never stricken with confusion. There never was such a person as Noah; and nobody ever built an ark; and there never was a universal Flood. The story of Joseph and his Brethren is pure folk-lore. Samson is a made-up hero for the children. The champion, Goliath, was invented by David's admirers. No nation ever wandered in the wilderness. The Ten Commandments were not given on Mount Sinai. The Jordan river never stopped in its course since it began to flow. There is no such thing as Inspiration. There never were any miracles. There is no supernatural. The books of the Bible are to be placed on the same plane with the literary remains of the pagan nations, Rome, Greece, and India.

These are a few of the things that were uttered by the be-spectacled scholars of Germany for the murdering of the Bible, or for the murdering of the faith of the people in the Bible.

Professor Beyschlag of the University of Halle, at a Christian conference held in Berlin, when destructive criticism was at the peak of its popularity, declared that there was not to be found a solitary professor in a German Institution whose orthodoxy was beyond question on the subjects of Inspiration and the Person of Jesus Christ.

Germany did murder its Bible by murdering the faith of its people in the Bible,—and this accounts for the inexcusable and unprovoked war that Germany started and that Germany is waging today against the nations of the world.

Germany has flung the Christian God out of its heaven and has erected a sort of cast-iron devil to rule in God's stead.

Germany has taught her people that the Germans are supermen, destined to rule all other men, and to trample all other peoples under their feet.

Mr. Herman Fernau in his book, "The Coming Democracy," defines German "kultur" as being "Learning without character, knowledge without conscience, organization without humanity, ideals without dignity."

The words of Mr. Vachel Lindsay might be applied to the poisoned German soldier whose belief in God has been taken away from him, whose faith in the Bible has been stolen from him, who is only a poor automaton, slavishly obedient to the commands of his brutal military masters:

“Not that they starve, but starve so dream-
lessly,
Not that they sow, but that they seldom
reap;
Not that they serve, but have no gods to
serve;
Not that they die, but that they die like
sheep.”

I owe you an apology, sirs, in advance, for now plunging you into a bath of German literature; but there are certain writers so frequently named in our speech of today that I have thought it wise to make selections from some of the books of Nietzsche, Treitschke, and Von Bernhardi; and then from the utterances of some of the German pastors, in order to show how far the teachers of Germany have departed from the ethics of the Bible.

From Nietzsche's book, "The Antichrist," I copy this: "I condemn Christianity. I bring against the Christian Church the most terrible accusation ever voiced. Christianity is to me the greatest of all imaginable corruptions. I call Christianity the one immortal blemish on the human race."

From the same book: "The weak must perish! That is the first principle of our charity. And we must help them to perish."

From his "Also Sprach Zarathustra": "One must refuse to be eaten at the time one tasteth best."

From his "Goetzendaemmerung": "The time is coming, I promise it, when the priest will be regarded as the lowest type, as the most mendacious, the most disreputable variety of human being."

A second quotation from his "Goetzendaemmerung": "The man who is truly free treads

under foot that contemptible species of security dreamt of by shopkeepers, Christians, cows, women, Englishmen and other democrats. 'The free man is a fighter.'

Nietzsche was for eleven years, from 1889 till 1900, a madman. He died insane in 1900,—but he is read and quoted and believed in by millions in Germany.

Here are some quotations from Von Bernhardi's book, "Germany and the Next War:" "The proud conviction forces itself upon us with irresistible power, that a high, if not the highest, importance for the development of the human race is ascribable to the German people."

On another page: "We now claim our share in the dominion of the world, after we have for centuries been supreme only in the realm of the intellect."

Another page: "Our next war will be fought for the highest interests of our country and of mankind. 'World-power or downfall,' will be our rallying cry." (Let me say here in parenthesis, that, in the war they are waging just now, it is downfall that is awaiting them.)

Another quotation: "Is the weak nation to have the same right as the powerful nation? The very idea represents a presumptuous encroachment on the natural laws of development."

One more page from Von Bernhardi: "Might is the supreme right, and the dispute as to what is right in war is decided by the arbitrament of war. War gives a biologically just decision."

Here are a few quotations from the war book of Henrich Von Trietschke: "The Germans are always in danger of forgetting their

power and their nationality through an excess of modesty."

On another page: "We must see to it that the outcome of our next successful war shall be the acquisition of colonies by any possible means."

Another quotation: "This Germany of ours was once the greatest of sea-powers, and, God willing, she shall be so again."

One more quotation: "It is not worth while to speak of these matters, for God above us will see to it that war shall always remain as a drastic medicine for ailing humanity."

A last quotation from Von Treitschke: "Merely to be able to say, 'I have never lied,'—this is nothing but a monkish type of morality."

And now, after two or three quotations from the Reverend Clergy of Germany, I shall let you emerge from your German bath.

It must be remembered that these words following come from the clergy of the State Church, who speak according to the German Kaiser's will.

Here is a quotation that ought to be spoken in a whisper. It is taken from a sermon by Rev. H. Francke: "We can say that, as Jesus was treated, so have the patient people of Germany been treated."

From a sermon by Rev. F. X. Muench: "Is not our Germany itself transformed into a suffering Christ?"

From a sermon by Rev. Dr. Preuss: "Germany is experiencing a repetition of the Passion of Christ."

Could blasphemy go farther? Has Germany murdered its Bible? Has Germany murdered truth? Has Germany murdered decency?

I quote from a sermon by Rev. M. Hennig:

"Each soldier must do his duty so that, when he shall one day answer the heavenly bugle-call, he may stand forth with a good conscience before his God, and his old Kaiser."

This bit of coarse sacrilege was amplified in a magazine, "The Young German's Weekly," to read like this: "When here on earth a battle is won by the German arms, and the faithful ascend to heaven, a Potsdam lance-corporal will call the guard to the door, and 'Old Fritz,' (meaning Almighty God), springing from His golden throne, will give the command: 'Present arms!'"

There you have it. "Old Fritz" on the throne instead of God. A Potsdam soldier as the orderly of high heaven; a guard of Prussian soldiers to keep the door of heaven! And then add to this the Hymn of Hate that is sung all over Germany, and you will be capable of answering the question: "Did Germany murder its Bible?"

Germany did murder its Bible. Might it be possible for America to murder its Bible?

Is America reading its Bible? Is America shaping its life by the Bible? Is America obedient to the mandates of the Bible?

Honor bright, sir, how many hours a day do you spend over your Bible? How many minutes a day? And you,—and you,—and you? Do you ever miss a day? Do you ever miss two days? Do you ever miss a week? Two weeks? How long is it,—be honest,—how long is it since you let the light shine on your Bible while you read a chapter in it and then got down on your knees and prayed God, for Jesus' sake, to bless that chapter to the healing of your soul? How long is it?

Are you murdering your Bible by neglecting it? Are you letting yourself drift, and

drift, and drift, farther and farther away from this Book that is a Fountain of Light?

Slow poison may take years to kill, but it kills. In the "Count of Monte Cristo" you are shown a case of slow poisoning which is as surely murder as if it were done with a dagger.

It is possible for the Bible to be murdered here in America.

And what happens to those who murder the Bible? The text tells you. You will get hungry for a taste of real bread, and thirsty for a draught of real water. "They shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro, seeking, seeking for the Word of God, and shall not find it." Thus it is written here.

I wonder how many persons there are in this room who are wandering; running to and fro! I wonder how many persons there are in this room, who, at some time in their lives, have seriously called on a Moonshee, a Swami, a Yogi, a Mahatma, a Guru, or the Seventh Son of a Seventh Son,—persons who put the opening of the veils of the future on a dreadfully commercial basis!

That is what follows the forsaking of your Bible, the murdering of your Bible. You drift. You wander about. The wires are down between you and the Father in heaven.

Maybe you have money and much of it. But your money, your stocks and bonds, your great houses of merchandise, your miles of railway that you call your own,—these do not take the place of Jesus Christ,—and you know it. Your soul thirsts for God; you cry out for the living God. "Give me Heaven!" They want heaven to speak by wire or by wireless.

The sorest tragedy that can overtake a human soul is to have faith in the Bible eclipsed!

God blotted out! Christ blotted out! Hope blotted out!

We spoke here last Sunday morning about the reasons for the war in Europe. This present war did not burst upon the world without a sufficient cause. It was Germany, God-defying Germany, Bible-murdering Germany, that danced around its witches' caldron, and sang the weird dirge, "Double, double toil and trouble,—fire burn and caldron bubble!" It was because there was no Christ love to restrain them, no words of authority out of the sacred Book to bridle and suppress them, that blood-lust, lust for dominion, lust for power possessed them, and they began a maniacal warfare that can have but one possible ending,—the crushing and humiliating and dismembering of the German Empire.

Civilization will never again be safe,—and civilization knows it now,—until it wrenches the sword out of Germany's hand and splinters it to pieces!

God has His high purposes in this war. He means to bring back to mankind a high and holy faith.

In America there are individuals who have murdered their Bible; in Germany there is a whole nation. Kaiser, warriors, philosophers, professors, preachers, citizens, school-boys, school-girls,—down to the humblest craftsman, the obscurest vassal, who have scorned the Bible, who have struck the Bible in the face.

God will see to it that those who want their faith in the Bible to come back shall have that faith again. God will see to it that the Light shall break again over the many who now sit in darkness and are praying for the return of the Light.

Amid the encircling gloom there is only one light that is safe to follow, and that is the light that shines from the Cross of our dear Lord. "All the light of sacred story gathers round its head sublime."

Kossuth used to say, speaking of the march of intelligence: "I know that the light has spread, and that even the bayonets think."

It is my own fixed belief that the devil is just now taking his last horseback ride across the plains of Europe.

I do not believe for one moment that the consummation of the age is near or that the final catastrophe is approaching. The Golden Age is not past. The Golden Age is coming. God the Father has uses for this fine old world that is not yet half-finished, and He is not going, suddenly, to burn it up or blot it out.

There is a vision fairer than any dawn that is going to be thrown upon the screen to be looked at by this world's tomorrow.

The war will pass and peace will come. Unbelief will pass and faith will come. God's Word will take its place in the van of civilization, and all the nations of the world will walk together in the Light of it.

We've traveled together, my Bible and I,
Thro' all kinds of weather, with smile or with sigh;
In sorrow or sunshine, in tempest or calm,
Thy friendship unchanging,—my Lamp and my Psalm.

We've traveled together, my Bible and I,
When life has grown weary, and death, e'en, was nigh.

But all thro' the darkness of mist and of wrong,
I've found Thee a solace, a prayer or a song.

Shall I now give Thee up, Thou Revealer of Light?
Thou Sword of the Spirit, put error to flight;
And thro' my life's journey, until my last sigh,
We'll travel together, my Bible and I.

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